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Abstract

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This thesis investigates the current situation of illegal street vendors and examines the related regulation and enforcement from the perspective of street vendors. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Shanghai, this thesis presents the working life of street vendors to show the impacts of their illegal status, and their everyday resistance in surviving, negotiating and challenging the exclusion policy. The findings indicate the current policies and regulations toward street vendors are inefficient and injustice. The right of vendors and their vending activities are severely limited. Moreover, some implications are provided for local governments and authorities to develop new approaches to promote street vending.

Keywords China, street vendors, illegal status, exclusion policy, resistance

STRUGGLES OF LIVING IN THE CITY

— Ethnographic study of street vendors in Shanghai

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Master's Thesis

Creative Sustainability, Department of Design

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Personal Motivation

I studied Industry Design in bachelor's degree and focused on enhancing the functionality of products and improving the experience of users. However, since I studied in Creative Sustainability, I have noticed that designers are increasingly involved in social design in Finland, UK, Denmark and other European countries. I have realized that designer could have a role in tackling the more complex social problems, such as the climate change, social inequality, and unemployment. Because of the curiosity and interest, I decided to investigate one social problem in my master thesis, trying to explore the design roles and also examine the knowledge I have learned. Therefore, Chinese street vendor is chosen for my topic.

I personally appreciate the vivid street atmosphere that street vendors create. I even become a street vendor selling traditional Chinese food in Restaurant Day in Helsinki. If people want to experience the culture of a Chinese city, one of the best and cheapest ways is to visit the local street market and have some street food. I consider street vendor an essential part of Chinese urban life and culture. They not only provide a variety of cheap goods but also make the monotonous urban space unique and vibrant.

However, despite their great contribution, Chinese street vendors receive unfair treatments. The government does not give legal recognition to street vending as they believe that getting rid of street vendors is the best way of keeping cities clean and tidy. Moreover, unlike other countries where vendor advocacy groups could help to oppose the policy, Chinese vendors do not have any organizations on their side to negotiate with the government. As a result, most street vendors in China are illegal and face tough times to make a living. They are constantly threatened, chased, arrested and even beaten by urban management officers. I have heard a mass of news about the violent conflicts between the two groups. Obviously, the current exclusion policy and regulation towards street vendors is inappropriate and needs to be changed.

Hence, with a designer's responsibility and mindset, I realize maybe I could have a try to involve in this social issue to initiate change and support equity. I am willing to enter the world of street vendors and help them make their voice heard. I wish people - no matter policy makers, urban citizens, social researchers, and urban planners will look differently at the issue of street vendors.

1.2 Research objectives

By investigating the complex social problem of Chinese illegal street vendors from the perspective of street vendors, this study aims to provide implications for local government and authorities to develop more effective and justice policies and regulations. Current research towards this problem mainly focuses on the national policies, urban planning, and economic value while lacks the analysis of the views of illegal street vendors and their real lives. Through introducing the human-centered perspective, the thesis is to investigate the needs, motivations, and behaviors of illegal street vendors, bridging the gap between the top-down policy and street vendors' real needs.

Base on the motivation and the objectives, the research question is:

What are the problems that illegal street vendors are facing in Shanghai, and how they cope with the problems through daily practices?

This research question gives a focus on the aspect of illegal street vendors negotiating with the current exclusion policy, aiming to explore the implications for design engaging to the illegal street vendors.

1.3 From solving problems to constructing problems

In the beginning, the research planned to follow the human-centered design process: gain an empathic understanding of the problem, bring up solutions, prototype and test the solutions. The outcomes might be a product, a service or an experience. Various ideas were dreamed up to help promote street vending, such as redesigning their vending carts, improving the licensing application service, making an educational tool to clarify the policy, designing an application for customers to find street vendors.

However, this solution-oriented mindset changed after entering the world of street vendors. It found the issue of street vendors was complicated, messy and long-standing. It is concerned with the livelihood of rural migrants, the orderliness of public space and the development of the urban economy. Moreover, the behaviors and activities of street vendors are affected by many different stakeholders including urban management officers, traffic police, residents, and customers. Therefore, the initial ideas were not feasible as they ignored the political and social

dimensions of this issue. If the government does not change the negative perception of street vending, it is difficult to help vendors develop their business.

It can be inferred that no matter what solution is brought up at last, it will certainly focus on one aspect of the problem while excluding other aspects. Therefore, this study shifted the focus to constructing the problem from pursuing an early solution to the problem. It means the goal is to bring new perspectives to the current issue of street vendors by using the designer's sensitivity, capability, and methods. The study wishes to provide inspirational sources for further research.

1.4 The structure of the thesis

- (1) The first chapter introduces the research motivation, objectives and the organization of this thesis.
- (2) The second chapter reviews the development of Chinese street vendors and the current policy in Shanghai.
- (3) The third chapter introduces the research methods and process.
- (4) The fourth chapter presents the current situation of current illegal street vendors, by looking into the reasons for becoming street vendors, working conditions and the unequal right they have.
- (5) The fifth chapter focuses on the interactions between street vendors and the chengguan (urban management officers). It captures how street vendors resist the exclusion regulation for earning a living and how the chengguan response to the resist.
- (6) The sixth chapter gives a detailed analysis of the vending cart and the factors limiting its design.
- (7) The last chapter concludes the empirical findings in the previous chapter, bring up some implications for further design research to engaging in the problem, and design some graphic to visualize the situation of vendors for easier understand.

Chapter 2

Literature review

This chapter provides a piece of literature review of street vending developments, conflicts, policies, and regulations, which will help the reader understand the background and the starting point of this research.

2.1 What is the street vendor?

Generally, street vendors are defined as businesspeople who sell goods or offer services to the public in the open air rather in a store or shop. In everyday language, they are also known as street peddlers, hawkers, and informal traders (Kristina Gtaaf, Noa Ha, 2015). In the Chinese language, they are referred as xiaofan. There are two main types of street vendors. The first one has a fixed stall that can be left on its site when not in operation, such as a kiosk. The other one is the mobile vendor who makes use of a cart, a cycle, or other means of transportation that can be removed from the street at the end of the business day (Bhowmik 2010).

In order to get access to more business, street vendors mainly occupy the urban public areas with high pedestrian flows (Hays-Mitchell 1994). Popular locations for street vending are the places around parks and squares; transportation hubs like important road junctions, bus and metro stations; populous institutions such as universities and hospitals; and commercial districts with markets or shopping malls. They offer easy access to a wide range of goods, ranging from prepared food to fresh fruit, from books to consumer electronics, from clothes to shoe repair. The working time of street vendors is flexible. Some of them do the business all day, like the food vendor around bus terminals. Some just appear in the morning or evening during peak commuting hours. Basing on different locations and goods they sell, street vending can be a full-time, part-time, seasonally, or occasionally job (Bromley 2000).

As an integral part of urban economies, street vendors can be found in virtually every country around the world (Cross 1998; Bromley 2000). However, their status is quite different between developed and developing countries (Ray Bromley 2000). The role of street vending is still to support the livelihood of the poor in developing countries rather than promote tourism or enrich the city's market (Bhowmik 2012). In most countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, street vending is treated as an illegal activity, and vendors are constantly harassed by the authorities (Bhowmik, 2005).

2.2 Street vendors in China

In China, street vending is an ancient occupation with a history of more than 2000 years (Sun et al. 2016). Like other developing countries, it is a pervasive phenomenon across the country as well. However, China is a socialist and centralized country since 1949. The development of Chinese street vendors has been deeply influenced by national politics.

2.2.1 The periods of extinction, recovery, and prosperity (1949-1998)

From 1949 to 1977, there is no room for street vendors because of China's socialist economy (Liu 2013). During that time, the mechanism of production and the allocation and distribution of goods were accomplished through central planning (Bannan 1992). Viewed as the "tail of capitalist economy," street vendors were organized into cooperatives (Huang et al. 2014, P.5).

Since the economic reforms in 1978, the country actively encouraged private business to revitalize the economy (Young 1995). As the pioneer in practicing private business, street vendors started to revive and rapidly developed (Liu 2013). They significantly contributed to solving the problems of the serious poverty and the undeveloped urban retailing system (Bannan 1992). Therefore, street vendors were generally tolerated by the governments even though many of them did not have licenses. (Huang et al. 2014).

Meanwhile, since 1980 when China entered "the age of migration" (Liang 2001), an increasing amount of migrants flooded to the city. Accordingly, the increase in urban population was as many as 268 million between 1980 and 2000 (Yusuf and Saich, 2008). A greater proportion of the migrant population are the people from rural areas who look for a better living standard (Liang et al. 2016). However, these rural migrants face many limitations and difficulties in finding jobs due to their low levels of skills and education (Kwan and Wong, 2014). Therefore, many migrants turn to street vendors as the business requires little investment and low professional skills (Liu 2013). The number of vendors has been increasing significantly. There is no official statistics on the number of street vendors in China because of their informal and unregistered status. News reports estimate there are about 30 million street vendors across the country (People's Daily Online, 2009), which accounts for 9.6 percent of the urban employed population (Yeh et al. 2011; Liu 2013).

2.2.2 Marginalization

In China, street vendors have made a great contribution to releasing the pressure of employment and providing affordable goods to residents. However, on the other hand, they have been blamed for causing many urban problems. Firstly, street vendors are considered as a negative influence on the appearance of the city (He 2008). Street vending is seen as a manifestation of a dirty, chaotic, and backward economic activity which is against the desired modernization of the city. Secondly, it is thought that street vending may cause traffic problems (Flock and Breitung, 2016). Street vendors usually concentrate in the locations with the highest level of pedestrian and vehicular congestion (Ray Bromley, 2000). In those limited public space, they usually take up street space, block pavement, and parking space, or cause congestion for other road users. The third refers to the problems of food quality and public hygiene. For food street vendors, it is hard to keep food fresh and clean due to the lack of facilities like water, freezer, shelter, etc. Moreover, due to limited knowledge on food safety, some street vendors may intentionally compromise food safety for making more profit, such as using deep frying oils (Shen et al., 2014). The last issue is about unfair competition. The informal street vendors who do not have licenses do not need to pay taxes or follow government rules, which arises conflicts with legitimate merchants (Wen J. 2010).

Therefore, Chinese local governments have been increasingly controlling and excluding street vendors who are considered as the public nuisance. Especially since the 1990s, many cities have taken a zero-tolerance stance against street vending as a result of the public cleaning campaign to achieve the titles of 'Civilized City' and 'Harmonious Society' (Boutonnet 2011; Cartier 2013; Flock and Breitung 2016). At that time, the primary goal of urban politics is economic growth and urbanization. In order to achieve it, one strategy put forward by local authorities is to improve the city image to enhance competitiveness and attract investment. Governments take a series of actions of infrastructures, cleaning, and beautification to make the city appear to order, sanitary, and modern (Lin et al. 2005). Under this image improvement campaign, obviously, street vendors become one of the main targets of exclusion due to their informality and high visibility in the public space (Huang et al. 2014).

2.2.3 The chengguan and street vendors

At first, it was the responsibility of the local police for regulating street vendors in China. However, since 1997, the chengguan system has been specifically established to deal with street vendors, which is a particularly Chinese phenomenon (Huang et al. 2014). Chengguan is the term referring to the urban management officers in the local Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau. Different from conventional police forces, they are responsible for enforcing non-criminal urban administrative regulations which cover extremely wide areas. For example, according to the workbook for Shanghai chengguan, their enforcement power covers 14 areas and more than 300 sub-categories infractions (Chi 2008). Besides regulating street vendors, the duties of the chengguan also include greening management, environmental cleanliness, pollution and noise control, commercial management like occupying roads, unlawfully distributing or putting up printed advertisements. (Shanghai Municipality People's Congress 2012). The population of the chengguan has grown dramatically across the country. By the end of 2015, the population of the formal chengguan is around 234,000, and the temporary chengguan is 221,000 all over the nation (China Daily 2015).

In China, the chengguan has the legitimate power to order illegal street vendors to leave, issue fines, and seize good in case of non-compliance (Flock and Breitung, 2016). As their main task, the chengguan has invested great energy and time in regulating street vendors. Through the patrol and monitoring system, they implement everyday policing to restrict illegal street vendors in public spaces (Huang et al., 2014). Furthermore, stricter control is taken during certain special periods like city development campaigns, national holidays and other important events. For example, during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the urban management Bureau mobilized 5000 chengguan who carried out 24-hour supervision and patrol to eradicate street vendors, beggars, and pedicabs around Olympic venues and city centers (China Daily, 2008). During the "Clean-up city" campaign in 2006, Shenzhen chengguan carried out actions 278 times which turned down 160,738 street vendors in 3 months (Shenzhen Urban Management Bureau 2006).

However, this zero tolerance policy is inevitably in conflict with the livelihoods of street vendors. The pressure for survival forces them to go back the street. Street vendors who are forcibly cleared off the streets usually shift back and resume their business after the chengguan leave. Consequently, the conflicts between street vendors and the chengguan have been increasing. Sometimes, these conflicts even turn into violent. To name a few, a sausage vendor stabbed a chengguan to death for trying to confiscate his tricycle cart in 2006 (China Daily, 2007); a 56-year-old watermelon vendor died during a confrontation with the chengguan in 2013 (Global Times 2013). According to police statistics, in the city of Guangzhou, there are about 600 violent incidents between illegal street vendors and the chengguan in 2009 (China Daily 2009). Such

violent conflicts are repeatedly shown up in the Chinese press and social media in recent years, which have drawn wide public concern. The chengguan, blamed for being brutal and violent, have obtained a notorious and fearsome reputation. They have become the epitome of “the evils of public power” and “ruthlessness” in public eyes (China Daily 2010). Ironically, Time magazine reported that “the word “chengguan” has even become a synonym for violence and brutality in Chinese. “Don’t be too chengguan” is an appeal not to bully or terrorize” (TIME 2009).

2.3 Street vending policy in Shanghai

Due to constant conflicts between street vendors and the chengguan, both official and public domains have arisen a call for policy change. As a result, some new policies have been taken out for regulating street vendors in different Chinese cities which include Shanghai as well. In 2008, Shanghai government established an inclusive policy which allowed street vendors to sell goods in some permitted zones of the city and at certain times of the day. In these authorized areas, vendors could apply the fixed stalls and obtain services for cleaning and lighting, but they need to pay the rent and operate regularly as formal merchants. At the same time, the policy also regulates street vendors are strictly prohibited from appearing in the “important areas” consisting of 90 main roads and 26 key areas. Most of these areas represent the city appearance, such as commercial center, train station, and city park. The “clean-up” actions will continue in these areas, regardless of street vendors are most likely to have business there.

There are some successful permitted vending sites like the temporary morning market located in Hongxin Road, the breakfast stalls in Antu Road, and the outdoor market in Caoan Road (Oriental Morning Post 2013; Global Times 2015). In these places, instead of direct management, the local government has shifted the responsibilities to the specialized companies, who take charge of the daily management, like ingredients registration and waste cleaning, for legalized street vendors. It seems like there is a hope and the street vendors could finally get the living space. However, there are just a few designated vending area get success. The policy has not got the results as expected (Global Times 2015). There are very limited places can be used as such permitted vending areas in Shanghai. The progress of site selection has been slow and inefficient as it is difficult to meet the needs of all stakeholders (People’s Daily, 2008). When selecting a location, it needs to make sure that vending activities will not affect public space order, formal retail business and the lives of residents. Many local district authorities had negative willingness to implement the policy in order not to get on the “troubles” (People’s Daily, 2008). Moreover,

the legal status of the street vendor is not stable as these permitted vending areas are temporarily authorized by government. These areas are likely to be removed if their existence against the society order or policy change. For example, it was reported that one permitted site on Baochun Road was shut down after just one year because the noise of food stalls at night had caused complaints from the surrounding neighborhoods (Global Times 2015).

Another action of the government was to promulgate new Food Vendors Operation and Management Regulations in the January of 2015. Under the new regulations, food street vendors can get licenses and do business on Shanghai streets for the first time (Global Times 2015). This is undoubtedly a big move. However, the government prefers giving licenses to the vendors who offer breakfast, vegetable, or fruit. The food vendors who operate at night are still excluded. The director of Shanghai Food and Drug Administration explained that the night snack was not a necessary need for citizens comparing with breakfast and the two kinds of street vendors should be treated differently (People's Daily Online, 2013). Thus, the vast majority of food street vendors still can't get licenses and continue doing business illegally. The problem of street vendors has not been solved.

Chapter 3

Research methods and process

From May to June 2016, the field research work was conducted in Shanghai. As the largest metropolis and financial center of China, Shanghai is one of the most popular cities for migrants, including street vendors as well. According to figures released by the Shanghai Municipal Statistics Bureau, the migrant population in Shanghai exceeded 9.8 million by the end of 2015, accounting for 40 percent of the total population, and more than 80 percent of migrants came from the rural area of China. Many of these rural migrants become street vendors as this business require little investment and low threshold profession. Therefore, it can be inferred the population of street vendors in Shanghai is large, though there is no official statistics due to its illegal status. However, in the shadow of Shanghai's spectacular wealth and modernity, there is growing the economic and social gap between wealthy urban and poor rural residents. In such complex background, we can fully understand the life status of street vendors, the contradictions, and problems they meet.

3.1 Entering the field

The field research consisted of six weeks of non-participant and participant observation, and in-depth interviews with eight illegal street vendors in the case study area. Moreover, informal conversations (with both interviewed street vendors and other vendors in the study area) and frequent meals taken at street vendors' stalls contributed to data collection as well.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in the field. It was not quite difficult to get permission to take interviews after I explained the purpose and the use of this study. However, there were two vendors refused me because they were afraid their illegal vending activities being exposed. One street vendor said she had been interviewed before by a student who then published the related article in the newspaper. But that article contained her specific vending place and time. As a result, the urban management officers knew the information and came to crack down all the street vendors in that area. Therefore, she did not accept interview anymore.

In order to gain trust, I spent much time getting along with street vendors. I visited the site three or four times a week, from 4 pm to 9 pm. Most of the time, I sited next to the vendors and started off the conversation with casual chat when they are free. Sometimes I would help them pack food, give change and introduce the food when they were busy. Gradually, I developed a friendly relationship with many street vendors. They kindly gave me stools to sit and shared their water, fruit, and food with me. What's more, they actively talked with me about their family, troubles, and experiences, which helped me develop a deep understanding of their real life.

3.2 Site selection

Although the population of street vendors is large in Shanghai, the process of looking for the proper research site was not easy because of their mobility and illegality. There was no accurate and detailed information about their vending locations. Before beginning the field research, the pre-selected site was the vending place located near the south gate of Tongji University. I had been there several times when I was in Shanghai last year. It had already existed seven years and consisted of about thirty street vendors. However, when I visited the place this time, there was no street vendors at all. The students from Tongji University told me that all the street vendors were cleared away by the chengguan since two months ago. There were just few street vendors would appear after midnight. After that, through the friends living in Shanghai, local residents and online search, I got the information about other hot spots for street vending in the city. But it turned out the street vendors had been cracked down as well in many of these places. In the end, considering the accessibility and diversity, the spot on the Handan Road was chosen as the field site.

3.3 A brief introduction of the field site



Figure 3-1

The site is located on Handan Road in the northeast of Shanghai. Though this is forbidden-vending area, it has attracted many street vendors doing business here. The special location and high pedestrian flow provide an ideal environment for street vendors.

The place lies in the middle of west campus and east campus of Fudan University which has around more than 20,000 students. When going to classes and dormitories between two campus, many students need to go through this site. Moreover, in the east of Handan Road, there are a metro station and Wujiaochang commercial area which is one of largest commercial centers in Shanghai. These factors contribute to great potential customers for street vendors. One thing needs to mention is like most Chinese universities, there is no kitchen in the dormitories of Tongji University and it is also forbidden to cook due to safety concerns. This factor has further increased business opportunities to food street vendors in this street.

Besides having access to plenty people, the location helps street vendors reduce the punishment from the chengguan as well. As show in the figure 3-2 , there is a 6-meter planting strip between the road and bicycle path. The tall trees and shrubberies of the green belt become the nature barriers which make street vendors cannot be seen from the road. Compared with others vending places on the main roads, the street vendors here are less visible and don't have much influence on the "image of the city". As a result, the control of the chengguan is not so strict which gives space to street vendors to develop business here.

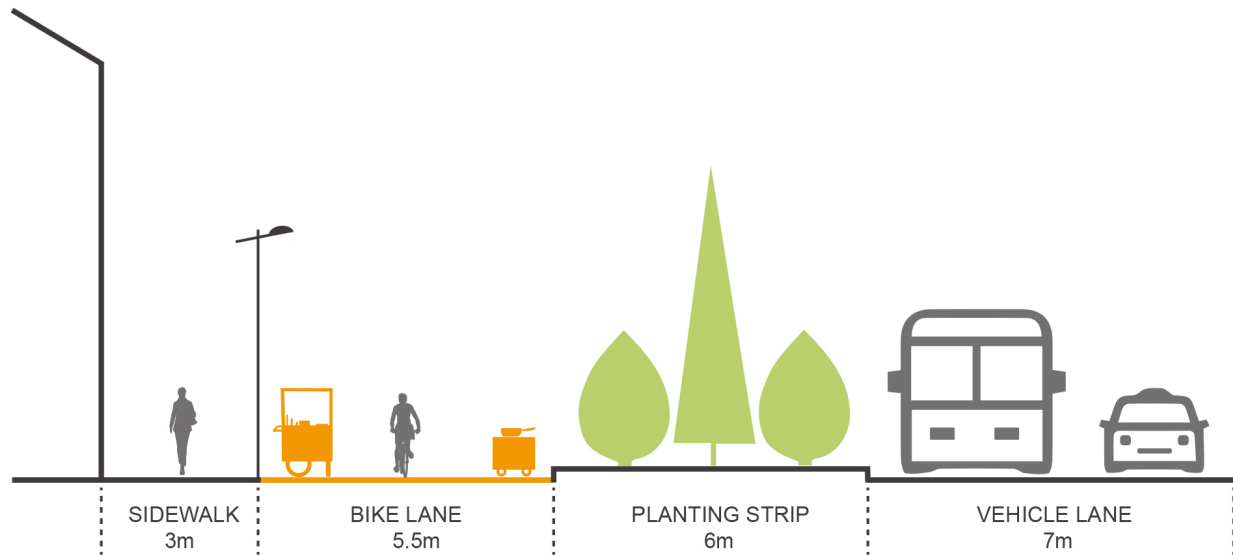


Figure 3-2

Since 2009, street vendors began to show up in this place. At various times in a day, there are different street vendors gathering in this site. Few street vendors appear to offer breakfast or lunch while most of them concentrate in the evening from 4 pm to 11 pm. During the field research, I focused on the latter for the observations and interviews.

On average, there are around twenty-five street vendors concentrate on the both sides of the 100-meter long bicycle path. Almost all of them are food vendors providing supper and snacks like fried rice, tofu soup, octopus balls and dumplings. The food sold by street vendors is cheap. Prices range from 4 yuan (0.5 euro) to 10 yuan (1.2 euro). Though all of them are mobile, these food vendors are relatively fixed street vendors as they come to this place almost everyday. In addition, there are always some new vendors joining in, such as flower vendors, sunglasses vendor and socks vendor. However, they just temporarily sell goods here and always just appear one or two times. Among more than twenty street stalls, three of them are operated by couples while others are operated by the individual.

All the street vendors in the field site are illegal without licenses. In the later chapters, the word “street vendor” refer to the “illegal street vendor” if there is no special instructions.

Chapter 4

Operating street vending in Shanghai

Before discussing the ways in which street vendors negotiate with the exclusion policy, it will be necessary to know their work and life situation in the city. So, this chapter presents detail portraits of street vendors to show: why they become street vendors, how they operate the business and what unequal treatments they suffer as living in the city.

4.1 The becoming of illegal street vendors

All the street vendors in the field site are non-Shanghai citizens. They come from rural areas, mostly from Anhui and Hunan province (both are inland and agricultural provinces in China). Most street vendors are not new arrivals to Shanghai and more than half of them have been in the city at least five years. When asked about why they left home, almost all street vendors responded “to earn a livelihood.” Due to the limited income of agriculture, they are unwilling to engage in farming the land and raising livestock as their older generation. Most of them complained “farming is hopeless” or “the income from farming cannot support the family living.” And since few jobs besides farming are available in rural China, they have to come to big cities to seek better income.

However, when these rural migrants settle in the city, they have narrow choices when looking for jobs due to lack of education and skills. They can just work in labor-intensive industries such as manufacturing and service. Comparing with other work available to them, street vending is more flexible, freedom and profitable. In addition, this trade is a low threshold profession which requires minor investment and no special skills. Therefore, becoming street vendors is the easiest way of earning a livelihood for them. The following texts provide a more detailed description of the reasons for engaging in street vending.

Many street vendors had jobs before they started street vending. They worked as waitresses and waiters, salespersons, safeguards and factory workers. These are low-paid and labor-intensive jobs, which are characterized by long working hours, low wage, low job security and rigid working schedule. Dissatisfied with such exploitative working conditions, they quit the jobs to seek better livelihoods. But lacking of money to start a formal business, street vending is the easiest way to earn a living.

“When I just arrived in Shanghai in 1999, I was an assembly line worker in an electronic factory. It was very boring. I did the same job everyday and could learn nothing. I had few opportunities to see the outside world. I toiled 11 hours a day and six days a week while the income was very low. I had to raise my whole family. So I quit the job after working for one year and became my own boss as a street vendor.”

- Li, the fried rice vendor

“I used to be a waitress in a small restaurant. The job was not busy, but the salary was too low. It was not enough for sustaining the whole family. So I intended to operate my own restaurant. But I didn't have enough money. At last, I became a food street vendor as this business required low investment.”

- Wang, the meat sandwich vendor

Besides, some of the street vendors used to be the shop owners. They tried to run the small business by themselves but failed at last. Due to intense competition and high cost, it was hard to make a profit. Many of them blamed that there was not profit due to the high rent of the shop. They had to close the shop and take up street vending.

"When I first arrived in Shanghai, I rented a place to sell my Chinese pancake in a nearby cake shop. You don't know how expensive it is. It cost 2000 yuan a month. But the area was just around one and a half square meters. The business didn't make money. Only two months later, I gave up. Then I bought a tricycle and started to do street vending. The business has been better, at least I don't need to pay the rent."

– the egg cake vendor

"We once have rented a small space to open a cafe. At that time, the business was good. But in 2012, the house was pulled down. Then we started to look for a new place. However, the rent was too expensive in Shanghai. At last, we turned to street vendors."

– the fried rice couple

Moreover, a part of former shop owners closed their business because of the heavy and hard work. For these rural migrants, they didn't have many special skills or other competitive advantages. So they had to ensure the profit at the expense of health. Though the income was quite good, it was not a long-term option. As a result, they turned to street vendors as they felt it was easier and less burden.

Fried rice vendor: no time to sleep to sell vegetable

I used to sell vegetables in the market. But it was too tired that I didn't have time to sleep. Everyday, I had to go to stock at midnight because the wholesale vegetable market was very far in the suburb. It took four hours to go there and back. After coming back, I could not sleep. I needed to prepare for the opening at six o'clock in the morning. And then I worked all day until the market closed at six in the evening. Finally, I could go to bed. But I had only less than 5 hours to sleep before going to the wholesale market. So comparing with that, the street vending is more freedom and make more money."

Mei: too tired to open printing store

"When I just arrived in Shanghai in 1998, my husband and I opened a printing store in the University. In order to make money, we needed to work very hard. I always had to stay up late to work for typing and binding. It unfortunately led my first daughter three premature birth. And it also caused my eye problem because of staring at the screen for a long time. So we closed the store, and I started to sell goods on the street."

There are also few street vendors who didn't have other work experience before. They have been engaged street vending since they came to Shanghai. For these vendors, hometown fellows, friends and acquaintances play an important role for them accessing to the street vending. They could get the key information about street vending, such as the suggestions about the vending place, equipment, and operation. With the assistance, street vendors could increase the chances of successfully starting up their business. Li, the vendor from Henan, in her forties, shared the experience in accessing to the business through the introduction of her hometown fellows.

"We used to grow pears in my hometown. But after losing money for two years, we chose to leave home to look for a new means of livelihood. I knew many of my hometown fellows was doing street vendors and making a good earning. And my friend told me it cost few to start up the business. So we decided to have a try. Then my husband followed our friend come to Shanghai and started selling cold jelly noodle. The business was quite good. So the second year, I moved to the city as well. We sell the same good but in different vending sites. So far, we have been doing this for over six years."

4.2 Working conditions

4.21 Hours of work

The street vendors work excessively long hours. Those food street vendors spend around eleven to fourteen hours a day in their business including the selling time and the preparing time. Though most of the food they sell is cooked on time, street vendors need to do many preparatory work at home, such as buying the ingredients from the market, cleaning and chopping the vegetable, cooking the sauces, and cleaning the stalls. These preparations usually cost vendors more than four hours. Besides, majority of them operate the business from 4 pm to midnight and some even end as late as 2 am. A few street vendors provide both lunch and supper from 11 am to 9 pm. Moreover, there is no weekends and holidays in street vendors' mind. They only take the day off when the weather is too bad or the students are on summer and winter vacations.

Many uncertain factors effect their business. Weather, regular holidays, big events all lead to fewer customers. The sudden attacks by the chengguan force them to stop selling and run away. Sometimes they suffer the confiscation of their goods and stalls which make them cannot work in the following days. Therefore, in order to ensure their income, the street vendors seize every opportunity to be able to set up stalls and work extremely long hours without rest.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt and a purple patterned apron, is working at a night street food stall. She is positioned behind a counter, and a white canopy is visible above her. In the background, there are blurred lights and a sign with Chinese characters. The overall scene is dimly lit, typical of a night market.

A working day of Mei

Mei's working day is very long and hard. Besides street vending, she is also doing a part-time job. She gets up as early as 5 am, then goes to the canteen of Fudan University to work in the kitchen from 6 am to 11.30 am. When coming home, after a quick lunch, she starts to make preparation for the street vending. She spends one and a half hours washing, cutting more than seven kinds of vegetables which bought from the market by her husband in the morning. Then Mei fully stocks her stall with source, water, utensils and packaging bags. After that, she loads up all the food and rides her vending trike to the vending site.

Mei usually begins her business at 3.30 pm and ends at 10.30 pm. She keeps operating her business at the same time in the same place. Sometimes, even though all the vegetable crepe roll sold out early, she continues opening to sell jianbing (a more simple Chinese crepe without vegetable) until 10.30 pm. "This helps me to develop repeat customers. If you don't have a regular time and spot for street vending, when the customers come and can't find you, they will get disappointed and not come again." Mei explained. And sometimes, the business is not good and there are still some vegetables left at the regular leaving time. At such times, Mei will change to another site two blocks away which is more close to the dormitories of students and continue to serving food until using up all the vegetable. Mei said the leftover vegetable couldn't be used for the next day. She preferred to work longer than just throw them away.

After arriving home, she needs to clean the cooking equipment and other food containers, check the profit and do some house work. When she finally lies in bed, it already after 12 midnight.

Like other street vendors, Mei works on both weekdays and weekend unless it rained heavily. To sum up, Mei sleeps only about five hours while worked at least 13 hours a day. Moreover, she needed to keep standing all the time during working. I have asked her if she felt tired and sleepy. She just smiled and said she had got used to it after working like this for years.

4.2.2 Competition in the market

Street vendors face increasing competition since a growing number of vendors enter this site. Furthermore, the prices of the raw materials have risen. But street vendors cannot simply raise their price, considering their customers who have been accustomed to the certain price of goods. So the profit has reduced in the recent years. However, the degree of these impacts is not great. For street vendors, the biggest threat to their business comes from the Internet.

The effects of the Internet development

During the field research, it is found that online shopping and online food delivery services has been boom because of the rapid growth of China's Internet industry. The habit of Chinese consumers has gradually changed that increasing people buy goods online. As a result, the business of street vendors has been hard hit and the number of customers has dropped sharply.

In China's top cities like Shanghai, online shopping is more developed and widespread. It offers many advantages for consumers, like the immense choice with low price, free return service, free home delivery in a very short time (sometimes even within 3 hours). By contrast, street vending loses its competitiveness. Many street vendors are out of business and need to seek other means to survive. This phenomenon is more obvious and severe at the research site. Because most consumers here are college students who are the main group for online shopping in China. A few years ago, a diverse array of goods was sold by street vendors. There have been street vendors selling clothes, socks, purse, shoes, and small electronic accessories like earphones, chargers, phone cases and toys. However, they all disappeared and only food street vendors remained on this street. Sometimes, there are few non-food street vendors coming to try selling goods here. But their business is not good and they no longer come after one or two times. During the observation, I noticed a sock vendor who had appeared two times. At the first time, he sold out six pairs of socks for 20 yuan (about 2.7 euro) in three hours. The other time he hadn't sold anything. Two hours later, he packed up his stall and left. When I on my way home, I found him operating business near the entrance of metro station where might have more customers.

Furthermore, the surviving food street vendors also have been significantly affected by the rapid growth of Internet-based food ordering and delivery services in recent years. Compared to buying food from street vendors, ordering food online is more convenient and time-saving. And the food is considered more safety and healthy as the licensed restaurants cook it. The following statement by Li, a vendor who sells fried rice, shows the influence on his business:

"Nowadays, students are too lazy to go out for meals. Many of them chose to order food online which can be delivered to their doors for free. My business is much less than before. I could earn up to almost 1000 yuan (134 euro) per day three years ago while now 600 yuan (81 euro) is the maximum sale."

4.2.3 Ways to increase income

In the face of both internal and external competition, the street vendors are forced to make adjustments quickly according to the market demand. They seek various ways to survive in the fierce competition and make money.

- Offering special food

Though all the regular vendors on this street are food vendors, the food they sell is quite different in order to increase each one's competitiveness. Moreover, most of them sell famous specialty and local foods from other regions in China. Such as the cold jelly noodle from Shanxi Province, beef soup from Henan Province, hot and dry noodles from Wuhan Province. These kinds of food usually couldn't be found in the restaurants or shops. Therefore, many customers have been attracted and wanted to try the taste. The following description shows one new street vendor successfully gain business by selling specialty food from his own region.

Fan and his Dan Hong Gao (Chinese stuffed pancake)

"What is Dan Hong Gao?", "What fillings are added to it?" Many customers asked this kind of questions in front of Fan's stall. Most people including me were the first time to see this snack. At that time, Fan would introduce his food patiently to others. The snack he sold is a famous specialty food from his hometown, Chengdu. It was similar with the pancake but the customers could choose the stuffing from the provided choice basing on their favorite flavors, such as minced meat, vegetable, sesame, spicy sauce and cream. Fan prepared more than fifteen choices for customers in order to attract customers.

Actually, Fan just started his vending business three months ago: "Before the February of this year, I had helped my cousin sell Dan Hong Gao in my hometown and the business was quite good. At that time, I thought this snack would suit the taste of people in Shanghai who like sweet and salty food. And I heard there were very few people selling this specialty pancake in other areas of China. After some consideration, I decided to come here and tried to earn some money." Though Fan was the newcomer on this street, his business was good and he already had some regular customers. On the day when I interviewed him, Fan sold out all the pancakes in three hours.

What's more, some street vendors provide different foods in different seasons to meet the needs of customers. For example, one street vendor told me she sold cold jelly noodle from May to September in summer and then sell candied haw in winter. Another fruit vendor also said he would change to offer roasted sweet potato in winter which was a popular street snack during colder months of the year.

Another selling point of some street vendors is offering healthy food. They clearly know the trend that people increasingly focus on the health eating besides good taste in recent years. Thus, the words like "green", "nutrition", "health" and "whole grain" are emphasized on the signs of the street vendors who sell tofu soup, steamed bun, sugarcane juice and other kinds of healthy foods . The following description of one street vendor's business illustrates the advantage of selling healthy food in the competition.

The busiest stall on the street

The most popular food on this street was vegetable crepe roll, which is a regional snack called "Cai Jian Bing". Mei has sold it since six years ago and her business is even better in nowadays. Beyond low price (just about 0.8 euro), this snack is popular because it is vegetarian and low-fat food. Without sugar and butter, the batter of this crepe is made of corn flour, soybean flour, white flour and water. And there are a mix of more than nine different vegetables rolled inside, such as Chinese cabbage, carrot, spinach, and chives. Usually, Mei could sell around 100 vegetable crepe rolls per day. When the students finish classes and go out for dinner (from 5 pm to 7.30 pm), it is the busiest time for Mei that she even doesn't have time to drink water. There is always a queue in front of her stall. Mei has lots of regular customers. She proudly tells me that some students who have already graduated still specially came to buy her vegetable crepe roll. What's more, though the main customers are students, this snack is the favorite food of many local residents, office workers and international students as well.

- Learning new payment method

Besides paying attention to the food preference of the customers, street vendors also have to follow the change in consumer payment habit. In China, with the development of Internet, mobile payment has risen rapidly in recent years. In the urban areas, especially big cities like Shanghai, mobile payment has been widespread adoption. People could use mobile to pay for almost everyday needs from grocery bills to taxis and utilities. Due to its convenience and efficiency, increasing people use payment service Alipay and Wechat Pay to send payments and transfer instead of using cash and bank cards. Hence, street vendors have to learn to use the new payment service to cater to the customers. They need to have smart phones, download and install the applications, buy the mobile data traffic, create their own QR codes, and paste QR codes on their stalls which could be scanned by customers to pay the bills.

The learning process is not easy for these street vendors who came from the rural area. Many of them are not good at using smartphone and social media. For example, when I interviewed Wang who was around 40 years old from Anhui province, I wanted to add her as my friend on Wechat (a messaging application similar with what's up but supports payment service) to contact her later. But she said she couldn't use it. I was so surprised to hear that because I had seen her customers could pay through Wechat. She explained that she learned only how to use the Wechat Pay. She was unable to use other functions of Wechat, like messaging, video calls, and group chat.

Although the use of this new payment method requires money and effort, I notice all the street vendors already accept mobile payment on this street. Actually, not only do they concern the need of customers, they prefer it over cash because the mobile pay is fast and convenient to them. They don't need to stop making food to get the money and give change.

- Taking part-time jobs

Though they had made efforts to attract customers, the business of many street vendors is still not as good as before. As a result, some street vendors choose to take part-time jobs in order to increase the incomes for supporting their families. For instance, besides selling fried rice, Li also works as an assistant cook in a bar from 12pm to 3pm on Friday and weekend; Fan, the street vendor mentioned above, visits local small restaurants door to door for one company's brand promotion on every weekend. It is an effective way to earn more money through holding two jobs. However, it exacerbates the long-time work problem of street vendors at the same time.

4.3 Limited access to social services

In Shanghai, though street vendors could earn a living through hard working, they can't access the same public services as local residents due to the hukou (household registration) system. Serving as domestic passport, China's hukou system strictly limits one's legal residence to his or her place of family origin. Street vendors, with other rural migrant workers, have slim chance to become registered official residents no matter how long they may stay in Shanghai. Lacking residence status, they are largely excluded from regular urban welfare benefits (health insurance, education, public housing, unemployment funds, etc.) and other rights that are available to those with local hukou. This has significantly increased the difficulties for them to live in the city.

Moreover, for street vendors, what affects them the most is their children receive unequal treatment as well in the city. In the research, it is found that most street vendors leave their children in the hometown – or send them back there – to be raised by grandparents. They only go back to see their children once a year. Why don't bring children with them? Isn't it better for children to grow up with parents? When I asked these questions, street vendors always answered sadly: "we have no other choice as our children have limited access to school". As rural migrants, numerous hurdles are put up for street vendors to make their children get education in Shanghai.

In theory, public schools are open to migrant children. However, many families do not qualify because of lacking the proper documentations. For migrant children to be admitted to the public schools, their parents must offer certificates like employment certificate, real estate ownership certificate, and long-term residence permit. However, few migrant families could fulfill all the necessary requirements. The street vendor Mei, the mother of three children, had to send her children back to the home village to attend primary school.

"My daughters cried for a long time. They didn't want to leave us. I felt my heart break but couldn't change it. I have tried to apply several schools. When the staffs saw I was not a local resident but from a rural area, they changed the attitude immediately and didn't like to talk with me. The schools required to provide many documents. But that is impossible for me. I am just a street vendor who sells food on the street, not belongs to any formal companies. I have no employment contracts."

Secondly, even if street vendors get a place for their children in public schools, they face high educational expenses. Indeed, the opportunity for education is also closely tied in with the household registration system. Only children of local residents enjoy nine years of compulsory education. Migrants have to pay ten times the fees comparing to the local residents. So, the high tuition fee has stopped many migrants from sending their children to the public schools.

Moreover, as being excluded from public schooling, most migrant families have to send their children to private schools to obtain an education in the city. But these for-profit institutions are usually unregulated and lack qualified teachers. Migrant children are likely to receive low-quality education and even face prejudice and discrimination. Street vendors interviewed describe the private schools as corrupt and incompetent. One street vendor in the interview shared her experience:

“ My children were once in Shanghai private kindergarten. The tuition fee is around 2000 yuan (280 euro) per month. It was a lot of money to me but it was the only way to let my kids stay with me in the city. But they could receive little attention at school. The teachers treated kids differently and looked down upon our rural migrants. I could feel it every time I pick up the kids. The teachers often ignored me but they warmly greeted and talked with Shanghai parents. What’s more, once my daughter got sick, I asked the teacher to help the kid take medicine. The teacher felt troublesome and complained a lot to me. You can’t imagine how poor my kids were in that kind of kindergarten. So I think it may be better to send my children back home. Because not matter what the school like in the hometown, the children will receive equal treatment.”

The final education hurdle for migrant children is they are not allowed to take the national college entrance examination in the city. Though they have studied nine years for primary education and junior secondary education in Shanghai, migrant students have to go back to

their village to finish high school and take the exam because of the restriction of household registration. This exclusion has great negative impact on migrant students as their motivation to study is diminished during precollege years. And when returning home, they are also difficult to adapt to the new environment. . Therefore, many migrant parents give up bringing their children at first when they come to the city.

These left-behind children lack adequate care due to separating from parents. Their grandparents are typically elderly and poorly educated. They always only focus on the children's physical needs rather than their emotional needs. The left-behind children easily have some kinds of psychological or behavioral problems. Migrant parents absolutely know the negative effects on their children. But they have to sacrifice their family life in the hope that the money they make will provide a better future for their children. This is the reason why they leave hometowns and work so hard in the city. They don't enjoy being a migrant worker. Many street vendors said they felt helplessness, loneliness and depression while living in Shanghai. "*nobody cares about us*", "*we live as second class citizens*". They have a very low sense of belonging and face great pressure.

Chapter 5

The cat-and-mouse game between street vendors and the chengguan

Chengguan's control is the biggest obstacle for the business of illegal street vendors. This chapter describes the interactions between vendors and the chengguan, as well as the complex relationship between them. It captures how street vendors cope with the current regulation for surviving, and how tolerant and harsh regulatory approaches applied by the chengguan in different areas of the city. Lastly, the reason why illegal street vendors don't become formal is analyzed, which demonstrates the limits of the current inclusionary policy.

5.1 The resistance from street vendors

As using public space illegally, street vendors have constantly suffered from raid, evictions and punishments by the chengguan. However, driven by the desire to improve life, street vendors always don't intend to turn down their business but rather to cope with the exclusion policy. With a long struggle with the chengguan, they have developed a variety of methods and tactics to maximize access to public space and minimize risks.

- Escape

The most common strategy is escape. As the chengguan may come at any time, street vendors keep vigilant and are always ready to evacuate. When the chengguan approach, they run away quickly and hide in nearby places. Few vendors move to other places to sell. Most of them wait and come back to their original sites to resume trading after the chengguan are gone. "It's a cat and mouse game," one of the vendors said, "We have to play it with the chengguan over and over again." Street vendors even directly use the term "black cat" to describe the chengguan officers in their everyday language. During the field research, I also experienced one raid from the chengguan. Scene 1 below describes the occasion I have witnessed, which could help readers to get the picture.

Scene 1: Black cats are coming!

It was a rainy night. The businesses of street vendors were not as good as usual because of the light rain. I was having a talk with the street vendor Mei. At around 8 pm, suddenly I heard someone shouting "Black cats are coming". And then all the street vendors began packing up their stalls. Mei also stopped talking and prepared to leave. But it seemed that she was not panic. Mei deftly turned off the gas, took down the umbrella, put her stool on the stall. Seeing this, I asked if she would come back later. Mei answered she would be right back after the chengguan left. Then she got on her vending tricycle and rode off quickly. Just in three minutes, all the vendors on this street disappeared. However, a couple who sold fruit were failed to escape and they were seized by the chengguan. It was needed to note the couple was not the regular street vendors on this street. They had a small fruit shop and wanted to make extra income through part-time vending. So unlike other street vendors using the vending carts, they came by a small van and displayed the fruit just on two tables. As a result, they couldn't pack up quickly.

There were five chengguan officers. They didn't try to pursue other vendors who ran away. Two cargo trucks parked on the side of the road. The trucks were used to carry

confiscated vending stalls. But now both were empty. The atmosphere between the officers and the fruit vendors was not tense. The officers didn't intend to confiscate the goods. They just asked the couple to leave and were going to give a ticket for the illegal street vending. The male vendor was moving the fruit from the table to the van, and the female was begging to pay less money: "Alas, you know how less money we can make one day. We have just got here and haven't sold much before you come." Then, the officer said: "It is useless to say anything at this moment. You definitely can't escape the punishment. We now just need to figure out how much you will be fined. I remember there were just three or four street vendors on this street before. But now it has developed to more than thirty vendors. It can't go on like this."

At last, the couple were fined 500 yuan. Under the gaze of the chengguan officers, they packed everything and got on the van. Then one officer took a picture of the clean street and they left. I thought the fruit vendors would drive away as well. But the moment the chengguan disappeared, the van door was opened. The couple took the tables and the fruit out and prepared to open their business again. One student came to buy fruit and asked: "Has the chengguan come here just now?" the female vendor complained to her: "Yes, and we paid a fine as well. What a bad day!" At the same time, other street vendors constantly returned to their selling point. Just in few minutes after the storm, every street vendors went back to business as if nothing happened.

-Avoid encounters with the chengguan

To reduce the risk of being caught, street vendors give up staying on the main roads where always the key areas regulated by the chengguan. In fact, most vendors in the study area had operated their business on another road before. That road was the main road which was closer to the dormitory of students and had a higher pedestrian flow. Street vendors had more customers in there. But at the same time, that road was also under the strict control of the chengguan. For street vendors, it increased the chance of getting in trouble with the chengguan and having to pay fines. As a result, they moved to the current place. Though it have a negatively effect on the profit as the location is less visible, they have more space to develop their business here.

Moreover, besides the spatial practice, some street vendors choose to sell the goods when the chengguan officers don't work. They clearly know the working time of the chengguan. When the chengguan have a lunch break from 12 pm to 1 pm or get off work after 6 pm, vendors come out to set up stalls. Furthermore, sometimes the chengguan will conduct raids after work as well. So few street vendors choose to operate the business after 10 pm. It is the absolute safe time that they don't need to keep alert anymore. But working at night is certainly more tiring.

- Build relation network

In addition to escaping and hiding from the chengguan, street vendors also have developed proactive strategies to resistance. They build up the network of relationship with other street vendors to help each other. Through this relation network, they share the information and news about the chengguan activities, talk about the risky time and places, and exchange their experience in street vending. And this network is expanded and strengthened through the relationship of the laoxiang (fellows from the same hometown). As their laoxiang who also become the street vendors are distributed across the whole city, vendors' network is always wide, which is not just limited in the same vending site. The following dialogue with a street vendor illustrates how street vendors get the inform in advance through the laoxiang relation.

—When do chengguan usually come? Is there any routine?

“No, they may come at any time. Sometimes they come everyday while sometimes they don't come for one month. But, I have got the news that the black cats may come here tonight. Now it's around 8 pm. I need to be more careful. They always appear between 8 pm and 9 pm. Moreover, it is said the inspection team is led by the main captain of the chengguan. It means the enforcement will be particularly strict. There is no room for negotiation if caught.”

—How did you get the news?

“Chengguan continued to conduct raids in these three days. Yesterday they went to the nearby road. So they are most likely to come here today. I have many laoxiang in those places. We inform each other. In Shanghai, there are many rural migrants coming from the same region as me. Among them, I know more than 80 people who are the street vendors.”

—How did they inform you?

“By call or send messages in WeChat (the most widely used messaging apps in China). In WeChat, we have created a laoxiang group to communicate and share the news.”

It can be found that street vendors in different areas keep connection to share the latest news of the chengguan's activities. This mutual-help practice greatly helps street vendors reduce the risk of running into the chengguan officers. Moreover, street vendors also have developed a more direct way to get the whereabouts of the chengguan. Some people are sent as the watcher to inform others about the actions of the chengguan. They stay at the junctions of the main roads around their vending places. When seeing the chengguan, they will immediately call or sent the message to warn. Some of these watchers even wait outside the office of the Urban Management

Bureau. Once the chengguan go out for inspection, they follow the car in behind. Street vendors call this as “track the black cat”. In the case study place, no street vendor have sent people to watch the street. But through their laoxiang relation network, this organized strategy is highly beneficial to them as well. One day, I was sitting next to the street vendor Wang to observe his interaction with customers. And his wife got a phone call. She only said a few words and hung up. Then she stood up immediately and said to her husband:” *The chengguan will be here right now. They have already passed by Handan Road (two blocks away from here).*” Wang quickly turned off the lights and started to pack up. At the same time, they informed other street vendors the news. Suddenly, all the street vendors on this street became busy for retreat. In the in-terview next day, the wife explained how she knew chengguan would come:

“Yesterday, my laoxiang inform me the upcoming sudden attack. He is one of the people who track the chengguan. We are familiar with each other. So he kindly called us. He is an old man around 60 years old. His family own two big barbecue vending stalls. They have invested more money than ours. The business is good. Each stall can make more than 1000 yuan per day. They will lose a lot if caught by the chengguan. So the old man has been sent to follow the black cats.”

5.2 The regulation and enforcement of the chengguan

The effects of the chengguan regulation have been greatly weakened because of various resistance strategies of street vendors. The cat-and-mouse game is constantly played between street vendors and the chengguan throughout the city. The fully exclusionary approach towards illegal street vendors is impossible as the government does not provide other jobs for numerous vendors. Therefore, local authorities and the chengguan turn to apply different regulatory approaches based on various geographic areas in practice. In the insignificant areas, the chengguan tolerates the existence of the illegal street vendors to give them some opportunities to make a living. While in the significant areas including main roads, shopping districts and sightseeing spots, regulations are strictly enforced by the chengguan to keep a good city image.

5.2.1 Tolerated illegality

It can be seen that the street vendors of the field study site are not strictly controlled. So this vending spot can last for seven years and vendors are able to have space to develop business here. This is mainly because the location of this site is not very visible. Therefore, since considering the place has little influence on the image of the city, the chengguan take toleration regulatory approach to the illegal vendors here though the place officially belongs to no vending areas.

The Chengguan don't supervise and patrol this place regularly. Regulation is selectively enforced during certain periods, such as national holidays and holding important events. One vendor has said: "It is not sure when the chengguan will come. Sometimes they do not appear in two months while sometimes they show up everyday. But compared with other places, they come here less. The chengguan don't care much about this place." His words are confirmed during my field study. I only saw the chengguan once in six weeks. Moreover, as mentioned before, when the chengguan fine street vendor, it is a peaceful process without tension and conflict. And the chengguan have no interest in tracking other vendors who ran away. The vendor doesn't feel angry and just think they have a bad lucky. After the chengguan leave, all street vendors reopen their business as before.

We can find that the chengguan have no attempt to crack down vendors and clean up the street. In fact, they tolerance the existence of illegal vendors. And these street vendors also have a tacit understanding. One street vendors even confidently said: "*This place is left to us by the chengguan. They have to give us some room for surviving. Otherwise, we will set up our stalls on other streets as well. That may bring more trouble to the chengguan. They know it.*"

5.2.2 Zero tolerance

While illegal street vendors are tolerated in the insignificant places, they are strictly controlled in the main streets and the key areas of the city, especially the places which are highly visible and very populated. The chengguan patrol several times a day to ensure the street clean without vendors. However, as these places are most likely to have customers, street vendors constantly appear regardless of the risk. Though the chengguan has tried to extend the policing time and conduct more frequent inspections, vendors always shift back in a short time after the chengguan leave. Facing the ceaseless resistance of the street vendors, the local authority has established a new measure to reinforce the surveillance – chengguan outsourcing.

Chengguan outsourcing means outsourcing part of the chengguan's jobs to the private firms. The people hired by these firms are working as the assisting chengguan to surveille certain areas. And not only in Shanghai, since first conducted in Shenzhen in 2007, many major Chinese cities have outsourced their social services. For the government, this is an effective way to save costs and resolve the problem of a shortage of workers. In fact, these assisting chengguan often work harder than the official ones. Unlike nine-to-five normal working time, they stay in their responsibility areas all day along, working in two shifts from 8 am to 11 pm. As a consequence, these outsourcing areas are always clean without any street vendors.

However, under the surface, many of these satisfactory successes are achieved relying on the violence and intimidation. Private contractors don't have as many responsibilities as the government. In order to maximize profits, those contractors are more likely to use quick and easy methods to achieve the desired effect. The assisting chengguan from the contractors are always temporarily hired and untrained. They always ignore the fact that can only ask street vendors to leave as assisting the chengguan have less enforcement power. They are rude and unordinary. To get the purpose, they do anything, including using violence.

In the field site, most street vendors have the experiences of suffering the brutalities of the assisting chengguan since they have operated the business in the forbidden areas before. In the eyes of street vendors, these assisting chengguan are more like ruffians. Three vendors shared their experiences and views in the interviews:

"The authority has contracted out the surveillance of the Guoquan Road to a private firm. I heard it cost 400,0000 yuan a year. These people don't wear uniforms. They are dressed in plainclothes, so you don't know there is someone to watch the road. When you start to operate business, they come to you directly and threaten:" you are not allowed to come here anymore, if you appear again, I will smash your vending cart."

- Wang

"If getting caught by the formal chengguan, it would be a better situation. They are not violent because they consider their reputation. The most terrible thing is having encounters with those "gangsters". They are the assisting chengguan, but they look more like the people from the underworld organization. They have tattoos of dragons and tigers. Those ruffians don't care about the image or the enforcement procedures. Once you set up your stall, they will come to overturn it without saying any word. That is so scary. "

- Mei

"Now, the chengguan have learned the lessons and have become clever. They are afraid of being reported as "ruthlessness", "bandit" in the media. So they seldom forcibly confiscate our vending carts by themselves. Instead, they have hired the "ruffians". You know what, these plainclothes stayed in the main roads around the Tongji University, University of Finance and Economics, are all not the real chengguan."

- Zhang

From the descriptions of the street vendors, it can be found that the assisting chengguan they have encountered even from the underworld organization. After I know this surprising fact, I did some related research online. And I found this was not the only case that the chengguan outsource work to gangsters. There are many news about the violent and coercive actions of the assisting chengguan. Some assisting chengguan even have been implicated in illegal deeds. For instance, the first news which caused a widespread attention from the public about the problematic chengguan outsourcing is the case of Gong Bo. Gong was an assisting chengguan. He was praised as a hero after he was stabbed to death by a barbecue vendor on the job in 2011. But Gong was later discovered to be a member of the local gang who had taken over the outsourced chengguan duties. Under the name of the chengguan, he with his companions extorted money from vendors and drove away vendors brutally. The street vendors could only go somewhere else or pay the fee.

Consequently, the assisting chengguan's brutalities have increased the violent resistance by the street vendor. Because for the illegal street vendors, they don't have access to make their voice heard in formal ways. They often have little or no choice but to put up with violence and harassment. Under the continuous oppression of the assisting chengguan, some street vendors are likely to use violent confrontation to protect their livelihood. However, these resistances always result in casualties. Like the barbecue vendor mentioned above, he was condemned to life imprisonment and needed to pay 680,000 yuan in compensation. And only when such tragic incidents occur do the public know the true face of these "assisting chengguan".

What causes the disorder in the chengguan outsourcing? Firstly, it may result from the authorities have not strictly carried out qualification examinations of the contractors in the bidding process. Moreover, due to lack of openness and transparency, there are likely to have black-box operations. As a result, the authorities open the door to the "unqualified companies", even the underground organizations. And at the later stage, a lack of regulations and supervision of the assistant officers also have helped caused the abuses of authority. Moreover, when the violent conflicts happen, the authorities always use the "temporary assisting chengguan" as a shield to shirk the responsibilities. They give the explanation that the officers who use excessive force are not the official chengguan. They are the assisting chengguan and temporarily hired. And the processing result is to fire these people. Obviously, this does not solve the real problem. New assisting chengguan will be employed and same things may happen again.

It is quite common for the governments outsources their work to the private firms to improve the efficiency and effects. However, due to the problem of the chengguan outsourcing, the conflicts between street vendors and the chengguan have become worse. The violence of the assisting chengguan has made street vendors lose their trust and confidence on the government. As everything the assisting chengguan do influences the government' image in people's eyes, street vendors believe the responsibilities and rights of the assisting chengguan are granted by the government bodies. *"The government took a bribe to outsource the work to the gangsters", "Of course the authorities knew the assisting chengguan were gangster. They just want us disappeared no matter in what ways.", "The government never think about us."* Many street vendors expressed their dissatisfactions in the interviews.

5.3 Why insisting on street vending?

Despite the poor working conditions, being continuously chased away by the chengguan and even encountering the violence enforcement, street vendors consistently return to the sidewalk and restart the business. Why don't they give up? Why don't choose other ways to earn a living? When I asked these questions, their common response is "nowhere to go" or "don't know what to do except street vending". Of course they would like to engage in formal business which is more stable and decent. But the reality is street vending is the only way for them to maintain their existing livelihood.

In the research site, most of the street vendors are over 35 years old. Besides low skill and education, they have been already too senior to find a satisfying job in the regular employment market. There are plenty of qualified younger labors in the city. The street vendors Ma, who is in her forties shared her experience:

"I am too old to get hired. Most of the jobs prefer the younger employee. The only work I could find maybe the dishwasher or cleaner. But the salary of these jobs is too little, just around 2000 yuan. It is not enough to support a family living in the city as the house rent alone is more than 1000 yuan. I also have three children to raise and need to save money for their tuition fee. I have no choice but to keep street vending."

Since being declined to access the regular job opportunities, some street vendors had tried to operate a formal business by renting small stores. However, most of them could hardly survive because of high costs. They are forced to return to the street and become street vendors again. The following descriptions of Mei illustrate her failed experience of transferring her business into formal.

After doing street vending for two years, Mei had some savings and rented a very small store. Besides selling vegetable pancake, she also provided freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juice to attract customers. The sales were more or less the same as street vending. However, after paying the rent, utility fee and taxes, the pure profit was too little, just less than 2000 yuan. So after two months, she closed the store and restarted to sell on the street.

"I wanted to quit the street vending since I had got enough of keeping worried everyday and being chased by the chengguan. But the food I offered couldn't sell at a higher price while the rent is ridiculously high. I know, being a street vendor is looked down upon by others. I also feel shame to do this. But what can I do? I have a family to raise. Making money is the most important to me."

5.4 Why not becoming legal

As it is quite difficult for street vendors to engage in off-street business and jobs, why do not they choose to be a legal street vendor? From the background research, we have learned that illegal street vendors could transfer to formalization through applying the stalls in the permitted zones. If operating business legally, they don't need to worry about being shut down, having goods and cart confiscated by the chengguan or being threatened by the assisting chengguan. From the field research, it is found there are several reasons leading to this result.

Firstly, many street vendors have no idea that they have the possibility to get a license. In the research site, more than half of street vendors haven't heard of this permitted vending place. They have taken it for granted that street vending is not allowed as being regulated by the chengguan everyday. The main cause of this low awareness of the inclusive policy is the lack of openness and publicity. Street vendors have limited access to the information about the permitted vending places. I experienced this when I did the background research. It is difficult to get the detailed information about these permitted zones, like the location, the number of the stalls, the opening hours and how to apply. On the government website, I could only find the guideline of establishing and regulating the permitted sites. The small amount of information I get is from the news reports. So it can be understood that street vendors could hardly get to know the permitted vending place if they don't live around there.

Secondly, street vendors are not willing to take the risk as being legal vendors may earn less money. For the street vendors in the field site, their existing location is good as it has high pedestrian flow. They have already gained many regular customers here and have a good income to operate the business here. However, if they want to be legal vendors, they need to move to the permitted vending place. They are afraid the business in the permitted site will not as profitable as it is now. Because when choosing the vending area, the government give priority to urban appearance, traffic order and formal economy. Thus, most authorized areas locate in insignificant places such as back streets and outlying districts. Since the street vending is a location sensitive business, the vendors are likely to earn less income due to the inappropriate location. Lu, the noodles vendors who had operated vending in the permitted zone shared his experience:

"I had tried to become a formal street vendor. Three years ago, I heard from my friend a permitted vending place would be established in Minhang District and looked for vendors to join. I applied and then sold noodles there. At first, all the stalls were rented out. But because the business was not good, vendors moved out one after another. I also quitted as soon as the contract expired. There were not many customers since the place was in the outlying district of the city. I could only earn half of the money compared to the previous incomes. So I returned to here and operated the business on the sidewalk as before."

Moreover, though there are some permitted vending places in good locations, the number is so limited that most vendors can hardly get access to them. I had visited one of such permitted sites. It was a temporary morning market in Hongxin Road which has been reported many times as a successful example. Due to the good location, a continuous flow of customers came to this market and street vendors kept busy. One vendor who sold vegetable there told me there were few opportunities to join this permitted road market.

“Because the business is quite good and the fee is cheap here. So though the market has space for 238 vending stalls, they are all rent out. You can only get in if someone moves out. But the competition is fierce. If you don’t have the personal relationship with the people who manage this market, you have no opportunity to get in.”

Lastly, vendors think they would lose the original advantages of street vending in these street-off market and permitted places, like good flexibility and mobility. If being legal vendors, they need to do the business in the fixed stalls as formal merchants. They can’t move to find more customers even if they don’t make money. Moreover, they need to comply with the regulation on operating hours. Street vendors believe it is more efficient to work with the existing flexible working schedule since it depends on the customer’ needs.

To sum up, street vendors have a low recognition and acceptance of the inclusive policy. For them, the income is the most important as they have large burden to raise the family. Being a legal vendor is not attractive to them since it can’t guarantee to make more money. So even though I told this new policy to the vendors who had not heard of it before, few showed interest on it. Most vendors prefer to operate the business illegally as most others.

Chapter 6

The vending cart – the material manifestation of various contradictions

As the means of transportation and income generation for the illegal street vendor, the vending cart goes far beyond its original function of carrying and moving. On the one hand, it needs to meet the demand of the street vendor to operate the business on the street. On the other hand, it is restricted under the pressure from the chengguan, traffic police, and local residents. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze how the street vendors make their vending carts meet various function needs and limiting conditions. Only then can we have a clearer understanding of illegal vendors' situation and their behavior.

6.1 The structure of the vending cart

In the field site, no one is exactly the same vending carts. Though these vending carts look simple and crude, they contain the carefulness consideration of street vendors. All the street vendors are involved in the design and production of their own mobile vending carts.

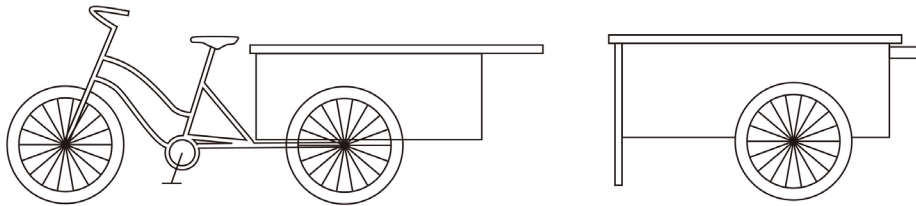


Figure 6-1

Figure 6-1 above shows two most common types of the vending carts on this street. One is made out of the cargo tricycle, with a flat wood board or a stainless steel plate. And the other is the wood hand cart made totally by the vendors themselves. The latter one is much cheaper. But more street vendors choose the former because of its good mobility. According to their own demands and desires, street vendors will customize their vending carts by adding various equipment, tools and signboards.

For the food vendor, the demand on the vending cart is much higher than others. Because in addition to storing ingredients and displaying goods, the cart needs to allow the street vendor to cook food as well. However, street vendors could not make their vending carts big as that will reduce the mobility. So they have to use the limited space efficiently. To get a more specific understanding, let us take Zhao's vending cart as an example. Figure 6-2 below shows what the vending cart looks like and how she use it to operate the business.



Figure 6-2

Ingredients, spices and packing boxes are placed within arm's reach to save the time of cooking. And because of the limited space, Zhao puts the gas cylinder in the front fixing with a bracket and rubber belts; spare materials are stored under the table; waste plastic, packing bag, and signboard are hung around the cart; and even the front basket is full of spare items. This vending cart may look a bit messy and disorderly. But it satisfies all the necessary needs of the vendor. Everything is arranged in good order so that Zhao could serve around 100 customers a day.

6.2 The reasons underlying the design of the vending cart

Because of the illegal status, the use of the vending cart is affected by various stakeholders in the city. Therefore, street vendors make many efforts to modify up their vending carts in order to continue their business.

6.2.1 The chengguan

Strong mobility

Mobility is the crucial factor for street vendors because they need to change places to follow the customers. More importantly, the street vendors have to be able to run away quickly when the chengguan come. Therefore, street vendors have done many works to customize their vending carts to enhance the mobility. Firstly, they add electric assist power to the tricycles and make them like simple electric tricycles. This assistance could help street vendors save more energy and go much faster. Otherwise, the weight of the vending bike is too heavy since it loads with gas tank, food, water, cooking equipment and many other items. It is hard to ride for the street vendors if just relying on their own strength. Secondly, to keep items from falling when moving, the edges of the platform are heightened with wood sticks. And rubber belts are used to fixed things on the cart. Thirdly, in the case of sudden attacks of the chengguan, street vendors have to get ready to move at anytime. They don't have time to pack up. Therefore, though the space of the vending cart is limited, they don't put things on the ground and keep everything on the carts. They at most prepare one stool for rest. Additionally, street vendors are very careful to use the umbrellas. They do not use them to block the sunlight and take down the umbrellas immediately when the rain stop. The reason street vendors try not to keep the umbrellas open is that the big umbrellas are so visible to attract attention from the chengguan. And in this way, they also don't need to spend extra time closing them when need to run away.

Minimize the investment

“Cheap”, “rough”, “unclean” are the common words people used to describe their impression on the stalls of street vendors. Actually, I also have the same feeling towards the vending carts in the field site. It can be seen that street vendors do not take quality, aesthetics and decoration into consideration. What they most concern is how to invest the least money to make the most practical vending carts.

But why don't they make their carts better to attract more customers? Before the research, I thought the reason might be that they were short of money. However, it is found that their incomes are not low from the interviews. The earnings of some street vendors are comparable to the wages of white-collar workers. They have the money to make some improvements if they want to. So, what is the reason? The following statement by a vendor gives the answer: “I dare not to make my vending cart better. Because if I put more money in it, I will lose more when I am caught by the chengguan and they take away my vending cart.”

These illegal street vendors face the risk that the chengguan might confiscate their vending carts at any time. As a result, they are unwilling to invest in the vending carts to reduce the loss. Many things of the vending carts are made with reused materials and cheapest items. Moreover, some vendors even make their vending carts all by themselves to minimize the cost, such as the fried rice vendor, Li. The below dialogue between Li and me shows the reason why he does not choose to use the vending cart being made out of the cargo tricycle:

— “Why don't you use a cargo tricycle like other vendors, isn't that one more convenient?”
“Oh, this kind of handcart is much cheaper. It just needs less than 500 yuan while the vending tricycle added with electric assistance cost from 1500 yuan to 2000 yuan. So, if my stall is seized by the chengguan, I don't feel so bad about it. I can quickly make a new one.”
— “Is this made all by yourself?”
“Of course, this is the fifth vending cart I have made. If I am lucky not to get caught by the chengguan, the cart can be used for almost one and a half year. ”
— “But how you push it home, isn't it difficult?”
“My home is close to here, less than 10 minute walk. So it is not a problem for me.”



Figure 6-3

The principle of minimizing the investment could clearly be reflected in his vending cart. Figure 6-3 shows the push vending cart made by himself. It can be seen the main body of the cart is made with wood sticks and waste cardboards. Two sticks of the wood frame are extended to use as the handle. The plastic tube fixed in the center is used to hold the big umbrella and hang the bulb. Bent wires and nails as hooks to hang the bags. And like other street vendors, Li adds small holes on the plastic bottle caps and reuses the bottles as squeeze bottles to fill with oil, water, soy sauce and other sauces. What's more, one important thing to note is that the vending cart looks much cruder and messier from the back than looking from the front. Li obviously spent less effort when designing and making the back of the cart as the customer would not see it. He just has considered the functions of it.

In fact, street vendors have the intention to provide better service to customers. However, having considered being chased and fined by the chengguan, they give up the thought. For instance, once I was sitting next to Li to observe him doing the business. One customer wanted to eat at his stall instead of taking the food away to home. But there was no chair or table provided for customers. Li could only give his stool to the customer. And this customer needed to hold the hot plate on hand to eat the fried noodles. Looking at this, Li turned to me and said: *“if there was no chengguan, how good it could be to place some stools and tables here. People will feel more comfortable and convenient to eat here. Isn’t it?”*

6.2.2 Traffic police

Besides the chengguan, the traffic police have deeply affected and constrained the street vendors’ behavior and their stalls as well. The traffic police are not responsible for governing the illegal economic activities of street vendors. However, since street vendors ride their vending carts on the road, they are always in violation of traffic regulations.

In fact, before the year 2013, almost all the street vendors made their stalls base on the electric carrier tricycles which was much faster, bigger and could carry heavier things. However, in 2013, Shanghai government enacted a law that electric tricycles were not allowed on the public roads in the city. This ban was strictly enforced that many vending stalls were confiscated by the traffic police at that time. Street vendors couldn’t bear the loss as one such stall costs more than 2500 yuan. Therefore, they had to make other kinds of vending stalls and most of them use cargo tricycle instead.

Nonetheless, when they ride the vending tricycles on the road, street vendors still will be fined by traffic police because of lacking license plates for their tricycles. According to the Measures for the Administration of Non-Motor Vehicles of Shanghai, manpower tricycles are required to be licensed by the traffic management department. However, the government just gives license plates to the tricycles which are owned by government sectors for the public service, such as trash collection, street cleaning. In other words, street vendors couldn’t get licenses for their tricycles. So, they can only ride their unlicensed tricycles to move.

As a result, street vendors have developed a variety of countermeasures to avoid the punishment from the traffic police. One way is to stay out of the traffic police’s sights. Some street vendors try not to ride on the main roads where the traffic office always appear. One street vendor stated

that the direct route from her home to the vending place just needed five minutes. But as fearing of being caught by the traffic police, she had to spend 20 minutes taking a detour along the side roads. Also, some street vendors who live far away from the vending place couldn't ride their vending tricycles home. They have to find places to store their vending tricycles at night and use other transportations to go home. Though this method makes them don't need to worry about being fined by the traffic police, they have to pay an additional fee for renting the storage places. And the storage places they could find are always just the parking places outside without water and shelter. So street vendors have to take the cooking equipment home to clean and bring them with food material to the stalls everyday, which is quite inconvenient and cumbersome.

Moreover, few street vendors use handcarts instead of tricycles to make their vending carts. From previous texts, we know that some street vendors choose the handcarts because of their low cost. But another important reason is that unlike the tricycle, the handcart doesn't need a license. Pushing this handcart to move on the road will not be fined by the traffic police in Shanghai. However, because it requires great strength to move, street vendors who use this kind of vending carts are all male and live near the vending site.

6.2.3 Neighbors

The surrounding neighborhoods always complain about the street vendors who operate the business in the residential areas for the disorder they cause: block pavements, create traffic accidents, make noise and contribute to environment problems. As located near the university, the street vendors in the field research area don't get these kinds of complaints. However, they still suffer the pressure from the neighbors because of the gas cylinder they used. A majority of the street vendors need to bring gas cylinder for cooking the food. But they are not very concerned about the use and storage of the gas cylinder, which is likely to cause potential safety problems.

The main problem complained by the neighbors is that street vendors put the vending carts with the gas cylinder outdoors in the residential areas. The neighbors think the gas cylinder is so dangerous to be placed in that way. The street vendor Mei described her experience about this: *"I feel embarrassed as a street vendor. My neighbors are not welcome me. They constantly complain that I leave my vending stall outside the building without any protection. They afraid it will cause a fire."*

For street vendors, they have no other choices. And they also don't think this is a big problem as they have used the gas cylinder in this way for several years. But under the pressure of the neighbors, many street vendors use a piece of plastic cloth to cover their vending carts in order to keep gas cylinders out of sight. Figure 6-4 shows the vending cart of the vendor Fan, and demonstrates what it looks like after being packed up.



Figure 6-4

Because of living far from the vending site, Fan rents a parking place to put his stall in the nearest neighborhood, which costs 300 yuan per month. He needs to wrap up his stall in this way everyday after closing the business. He said if he didn't do like this to cover the gas cylinder, the residents wouldn't let him place his stall there.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and Discussion

7.1 Conclusion

Street vending in China has a complicated history resulting from rapid urbanization and economic reform. While this trade creates countless jobs to rural migrants and provides affordable goods to urban low-income households, contemporary Chinese governments are more concerned to clean street vendors off to pursue a tidy and clean city image. From the perspectives of the status of illegal street vendors and their resistance practices in Shanghai, this study indicates the current exclusionary policies and regulations of street vending are inappropriate and inefficient.

Due to lack of identity in the city, illegal street vendors can enjoy neither the dignity nor the right to work and live in the city. They face a multitude of problems such as the difficulty in obtaining licenses, insecurity places of vending, constant eviction threats, fines by the traffic police and the lack of access to social welfare. Moreover, the most pressing risk for illegal street vendors is the regulation from the chengguan. The chengguan forcibly evict them from streets or confiscate their vending carts to prevent street vendors from appearing in public spaces.

However, the necessity for earning a living drives illegal street vendors to keep doing business on streets. They have developed various survival strategies to cope with chengguan control. Also, they customize their vending carts to meet the demands for operating business in the illegal environment. At the same time, under the influence of the exclusion policy, the operating behaviors of illegal street vendors tend to be short-term and opportunistic. In order to minimize the risk, street vendors are unwilling to invest in improving their equipment and image. They even illegally add electric assist power to their vending cart for escaping from the chengguan.

Furthermore, the local government attempts to leave some survival space for illegal street vendors for alleviating social contradictions. Some permitted vending areas are established and the local authorities and the chengguan show tolerance to illegal vendors in certain geographic areas. However, these short-term approaches still aim at the city image and urban orderliness rather than serving the interests of street vendors. Therefore, they do not truly solve the problems.

If the government continues to ignore the existence of the growing numbers of illegal street vendors and their roles, the conflict is bound to increase. There is thus a need for a positive policy that gives clear legal status to street vendors, recognize their right to work and the right to occupy urban space. Instead of current chengguan system, the local authorities need to set a new regulatory approach with fewer restrictions and more actively planning. If the government provides and promotes a supportive environment, street vendors are able to become assets to the city.

7.2 Implications for policy makers

Based on the research, I bring up some implications which may help the governments develop more effective policies and implement these policies. And each implication could be used as a starting point for further design research to explore more specific design practice.

1 Street vendors need to participate in the planning process of vending areas.

When local authorities attempt to promote street vending, the most realistic operational problem is the planning of permitted vending areas. Under the previous mode of selection, the prime urban spaces of Shanghai, consisting of 90 main roads and 26 key areas are defined as “forbidden vending zones”, while most permitted vending areas are located in the outlying districts of the city and in insignificant places. As a result, few planned vending sites are successful and most of them have high desertion rates.

It can be seen the city governments give priority to urban appearance and orders when choosing vending areas. The needs of street vendors are rarely considered in the decision-making process. However, street vendors have the final word in reality. Since street vendors find it hard to earn enough income for a livelihood there, they prefer to operate business illegally as before in the forbidden areas, even in the face of strict regulation. Moreover, even when all existing illegal vendors are moved and stay in the permitted vending areas, their previous vending places are likely to appear new vendors who see the business opportunities in the high pedestrian flow.

Obviously, street vendors know better than municipal officials which streets and time slots are more suitable for vending business. Therefore, street vendors need to participate in the process of planning the vending sites and time. Their voice should be heard as other stakeholders. It is a constructive way to help authorities accurately understand vendor’s needs and street environment, which could avoid the government wasting time and money on anything inappropriate.

2 Recognize and promote organizations of street vendors

For now, due to lack of legal status, street vendors are unqualified to establish their own organizations or join any formal association. With the absence of organizational representation, they cannot negotiate with local authorities and make their voice heard in formal ways. As a result, they have to develop a variety of flexible and informal strategies to overcome the restrictions and retain the right to public spaces. Such resistances make the current policy difficult to practice, as well as exacerbate the social conflict.

Hence when legalizing street vending, it is necessary for the government to recognize and support vendors' organizations, like unions, cooperatives associations and NGO. As mediators and facilitators, vendors' organizations will contribute to filling the gap in top-down governance. On the one hand, they can help street vendors defend their right, promote the dialogues with government, and solve problems existing in vendors themselves. On the other hand, the government can share the responsibility with these organizations to promote effective management of street vending. Instead of urban management officers, these organizations could play a better role in organizing and regulating vendors while supporting their livelihood.

More specifically, organizations of street vendors can establish following projects:

- 1, Develop and design self-regulatory guidelines for street vendors, enable them to act in an organized and appropriate manner.
- 2, Make educational resource for vendors to clarify the rules and process when applying for the licenses.

3 Self-regulation is a good approach of control

Street vendors are normally treated as troublemakers who occupy an urban space out of control. However, from the study we learn the studied site is not a chaotic assemblage of street vendors but rather an orderly small market governed by informal rules and regulations. Firstly, while there are competitions among vendors, they have no conflict for occupying the place to set up the stall. More than half of vendors on this street are established vendors who come here almost everyday and occupy the same places. These vendors don't need to come earlier for getting a spot. And their places will not be contested even though they need to be absent for a while. Their

neighborhood will help to hold the space. Moreover, this site is not a closed community that new street vendors are constantly entering. The newcomers follow the “first come, first choice” rule to appropriate the rest spaces. They won’t try to occupy the place of the old-established vendors. We can see that despite nobody have right to establish the ownership right to a piece of public space, the vendors follow this informal norm to keep the order.

Secondly, vendors keep a friendly relationship with each other, which contributes to the functioning and governing of the site. Vendors know each other well and usually help others. If one vendor is too busy with business, the neighbor will come to help. And they share contacts and recommendations, exchange news about the enforcement action, inform others when the chengguan will come. Though this relation does not make them hold together like friends, it can help avoid vicious competition among vendors and enhance the stability of the site. Furthermore, vendors rely on the long-term relationship with customers. Especially these relatively fixed street vendors, they have built a mutual trust with nearby students and local resident. So there are no cunning and trickery in the interaction with their customers. They provide friendly personal service and try to keep the streets clean and safe for customers.

The findings suggest that no further regulation is needed, as street vendors could govern and regulate themselves to keep the order and appearance of the site. Instead of close supervision and law enforcement, the local authorities should change their role to guide and encourage street vendors to practice self-regulation. It is a more viable and efficient way for daily management. If given individual permits, property rights and some legal protections, vendors could and would like to take up the responsibility of maintaining order and keeping the environment clean.

4 Keep the mobility of street vendors

Mixing regulation with promotion, the current government policy on the street vending is to establish permitted vending places and mostly with the provision of stationary stalls. Vendors need to sell from these fixed stalls which usually have a uniform design. However, I don’t think this sort of fixed stalls is a good option since there is not enough and suitable urban space to place them. More importantly, the spatial mobility of street vendors is limited in this way.

The mobility is the crucial factor for successful street vending. This characteristic not only allows vendors to change places to engage the customers but also contribute to constituting urban space more dynamic and vitality. Due to the fast pace of urban development and the pursuit for

"a modern metropolis", the construction of current Chinese city is dominated by the generic masterplan which mainly focuses on the infrastructure and inaccessible landscaping (Shinohara 2011). As a result, many public spaces, especially public spaces, seem to be intentionally designed to be looked at but not touched and engaged by citizens. They are clean, neat, and some are decorated with potted plants. But in most of the time, these spaces are empty or merely for passing through. Mobile street vendors, who have developed within the existing urban contexts, help to enhance the use and function of the urban spaces. We can clearly see the beneficial impacts from the field study area. As mentioned before, the space occupied by the street vendors is a bicycle path which is five and a half meters wide. While the path is actually built too wide that the bicycle traffic there is not so heavy, mobile street vendors convert this empty urban space into highly dynamic and efficiency. At various times in a day, there are different street vendors gathering in this site to satisfy the different demand of citizens. And they will disappear when lack of customers. The created vending place doesn't block the traffic. Conversely, it is appreciated by local residents and outsiders, students and office workers. It generates a temporally gather point which encourages people to spend more time interacting on the street.

Therefore, it is significantly important for the street vendors to keep the character of spatial mobility. Offering fixed stalls in the vending area seems to provide convenience for street vendors and facilitate management. However, it is not a feasible way for long-term development for both street vendors and the city. Here is a successful case of using vendors' mobility. Figure 7-1 below shows a temporary morning market in Hongxin Road in Shanghai. It opens from 5:00 am to 8:30 am. And after that, the street restores to pavement. While filling gaps in supply, this market has not affected the normal traffic. This is a good way to promote street vending.



Figure 7-1

5 Make the policy and regulation clear and accessible

Current regulations and licensing systems for street vendors are complex, fuzzy and varied based on different district administrations in Shanghai (there are eighteen districts in Shanghai). Additionally, they are rarely available to street vendors due to lack of openness. As a result, vendors often have a low degree of familiarity with the policy and regulation. The field study shows that most street vendors have no idea that they have the possibility to get a license. They take it for granted that street vending is illegal.

Hence, the government needs to pay attention to promoting the policy and regulation with more openness and publicity. Local authorities should publish relative information about street vending through the websites or other platforms, informing the change of policy, the standard of regulation, the instructions of getting licenses, the numbers of vending stalls available for application, etc. More specifically, it is necessary to provide an official “street vending map” to help vendors identify where are the permitted vending areas, strictly controlled areas, and strictly prohibited areas. Through this map, vendors could know where they can operate the business legally and check if they face fines when confronted by chengguan.

6 Use social media to reach street vendors

It is worth noting the widespread use of smartphones and social network in street vendors. In the field study area, every street vendor has a smartphone to offer mobile payment service to customers. Moreover, they also intensely use social networks to get the latest news on the street vending and share the information about the activities of urban management officers.

Therefore, we can infer that social media is able to become a good tool for governments to communicate and engage with street vendors. Compared to traditional channels, like television, and newspaper, leaflet, social media will increase the speed and spread of information. Local authorities should join the social networking services like Wechat, Weibo (Chinese version of Twitter), to update information and development about street vending. In this way, the governments not only improve the transparency of their information but also get closer with vendors since street vendors can give comments and feedbacks towards the actions of government.

On the other hand, the use of smartphone also offers numerous opportunities for vendors to develop their business. For example, mobile street vendors can update their real-time location on social media sites to make it easy for customers to find them. Through this approach, they can avoid losing regular and potential new customers due to lack of fixed location.

7.3 Implications for socially-engaged designers

Different from the previous experience of designing products and services, I attempted to involve in a complex social problem in this study. Having faced many challenges, I sometimes felt overwhelmed due to broad and complicated research subject. In the end, I would like to share my experiences and thoughts so that other designers with similar interests could learn from the detour I have taken.

Overly optimistic to solution-orientated approach

With a designer's ambition and responsibility, I entered the world of street vendors. In the beginning, I was quite optimistic and conceived of many design ideas which I believed could help the development of street vending. For example I thought I might help street vendors to design better vending carts which could improve their poor image to attract more customers. However, with the gradual deeper understanding of street vendors, I find my hypothesis were too shallow associating with the big picture of this social issue.

No one knows the ins and outs of street vending more than the vendors themselves. From the study, I realize I have little knowledge and skills to lend them in terms of knowing the need of their customers, the ways of growing business and the methods of reducing risks. As I have analyzed, they have a poor-looking cart not because they are not able to design or make a better one.. The fact is the design of a vending cart is limited by many factors, like the mobility, the investment, moving distance and the store place (in chapter six). The finding shows that it makes no sense to make a better-looking cart if it is destined to be confiscated by the chengguan.

Overall, I realized I was working in a futile attempt to seek design solutions to this social problem. The problem of street vendors is related to many broader social structures such as rapid urbanization, social inequality, low education levels and other messy, intractable social issues. It seems there is no practical value attempting to bring up a product, a service or other design solutions in a definitive way. Therefore, when involved in a social problem, this solution-oriented mindset faces challenge and limitation.

What can design do for social problems?

For a long time, I have been demoralized with self-doubt. I feel I could do nothing about the problems of street vendors and my project is meaningless as I cannot bring up a design solution. I wonder what the outcomes of design are if without the familiar ends of products or services? What can design do for the social problem?

Learning from the relative research works and basing on my own experience, I have realized that design could contribute to providing new ways of looking at a problem. Drawing from the ethnographic research, I could present a faithful and holistic picture of what is actually happening in everyday life of the street vendor. And new and in-depth insights could be brought up from the unnoticed aspects of the problem (the ways of operating the business, the interactions with the urban management officers, the reasons underlying the design of the vending cart). These may contribute to constructing the social problem and opening up dialogues for further investigation.

7.4 Design part

**10 things
you may
not know about
Chinese street vendors**

Most of them are illegal



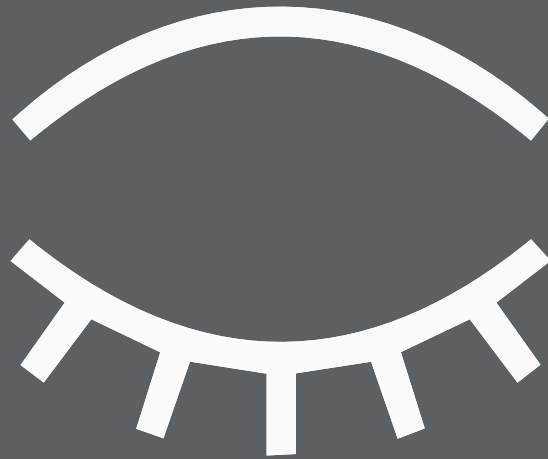
Street vendors are treated as troublemakers who have a negative influence on the city image. So, the government does not give legal recognition to them.

Playing the cat-and-mouse game with the chengguan



To maximize access to public space, street vendors play the cat-and-mouse game with the chengguan (the urban management officers). When the chengguan approach, street vendors run away quickly. And when the chengguan leave, they come back to the original place to resume trading.

Lying in the grey area between legal and illegal



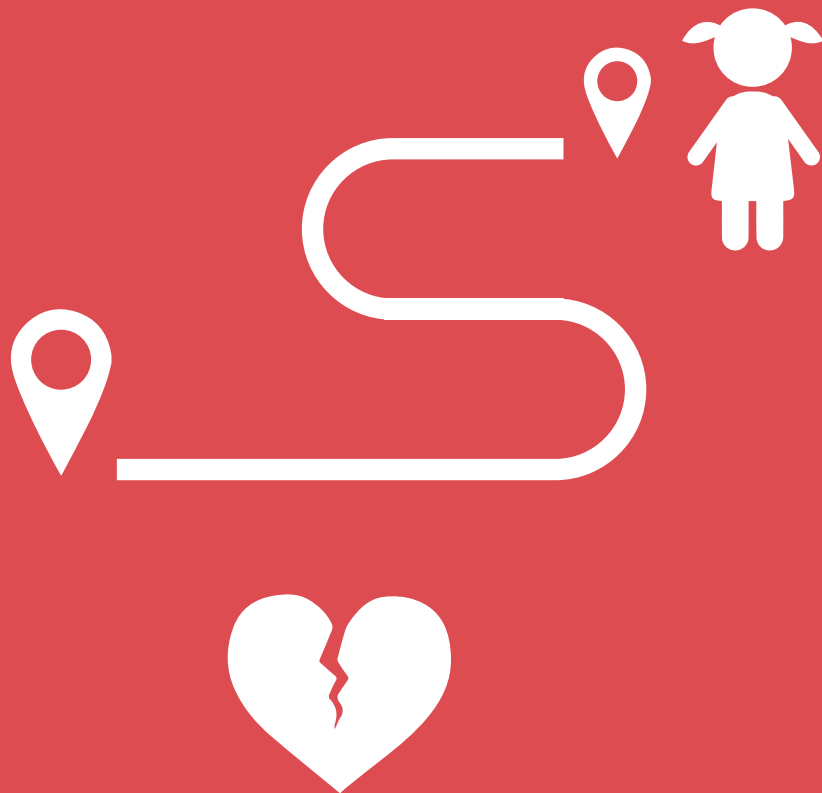
Street vendors have constantly suffered from raid, evictions and punishments by the chengguan. But sometimes, the chengguan turn a blind eye to the vendors, especially in the insignificant areas of the city.

Under various pressure from society



Besides the urban management officers, street vendors suffer the pressure from various stakeholders: the multi authorities, the traffic police, the residents, the cleaners and the formal merchants.

Being separated from their children



Because their children don't have access to the education in the city, most street vendors have to leave their children in the hometown to be raised by grandparents.

Working long hours



Street vendors usually need to work around eleven to fourteen hours a day. In order to make more money, they also barely have weekends and vacations.

Business drop due to online shopping



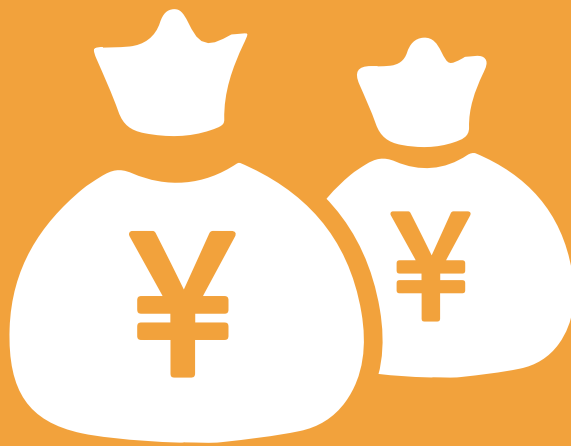
Because of the rapid growth of Internet industry, online shopping has been boom in China in recent years. The habit of Chinese consumers has gradually changed that increasing people buy goods online. As a result, the business of street vendors has been hard hit.

Widespread use of mobile payment



With the widespread use of mobile payment in China, many street vendors have adopted this new payment method in their business just as the supermarket and the restaurant do.

Making more money than fresh graduates



The earnings of some street vendors are comparable to the wages of white-collar workers. In Shanghai, street vendors can earn 5,000~6,000 yuan per month, and even 10,000 yuan in the best time, while the first-year salary for many fresh graduates is only 5,000 yuan.

Customizing their vending carts



All the street vendors are involved in the design and production of their vending carts. They make their own tools and equipment to reduce the investment and meet their certain needs.

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